industry, supporting infrastructure, policy framewqrk etc. During 1997-98 exports were affected due to factors such as general slow-down in world trade and especially-the recession in many countries in South East Asia, Japan and Germany; supply side constraints in some sectors, erosion of competitiveness and slow industrial growth.

(c) During April-March, 1996-97 exports registered a growth rate of 5.3% in dollar terms and 11.7% in rupee terms.

(d) Export Promotion Measures are continuously being taken by the Government through changes in policies and procedures for providing an export friendly environment, involvement of State in export promotion and in consultation with trade and industry, The Government is according high priority to exports and all necessary steps are being taken to put exports on a high growth trajectory.

India's Share in Export of Spices

2143. SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the percentage share of India in World Trade of Spices; and

(b) the promotional schemes envisaged to increases export of spices?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a)The percentage share of India in world trade of spices in 1997-98 is 48.6% in quantity and 24.2% in value terms.

(b) Apart from the general trade policy reforms, some of the steps taken to enhance export of spices include abolition of cess on export of pepper (except green pepper in brine), cardamom, saffron and spice oils and oleoresins to make them price competitive in the overseas markets; implementation of brand promotion schemes like "Logo Promotion"; grant of "Spice House Certificate" as a recognition of processer/exporter of quality products; setting up of laboratories for testing of products to ensure quality; technology transfer; process upgradation and. product development. India's Stand at WTO's Geneva meeting.

2144. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state the details of India's stand on different issues raised in the recently held Geneva meeting of WTO?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House (See below)

Statement

In the Second Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation held in Geneva on 18-20th May, 98, India forcefully articulated its view that existing Agreements arising out of the Uruguay Round should be effective implemented so as to ensure that benefits of the multilateral trading system flow to all countries particularly developing countries like India. It was conveyed in unambiguous terms that trade must be a tool for development in tune with the basic aim of the Uruguay Round negotiations.

India expressed its concern regarding inadequate market access in textiles, problems in the implementation of the Agreement on Agriculture, unilateral action by developed countries disregarding GATT provisions, imbalances in the TRIPs Agreement, the proliferation of regional trade arrangements not complementary or consistent with the GATT rules, repeated use of anti-dumping measures and countervailing duties, protectionist non-tafirr measures by certain developed countries and inadequate implementation of Special & Differeential provisions for developing countries, as set out in different WTO Agreements. With regard to Electronic Commerce, India emphasised that the work programme should clearly define the scope of electronic commerce and analyse its implications, with the General Council paying close attention to the issue of transfer of technology relating to electronic commerce so as to ensure that the benefits of

growth in this new area are equitably distributed.

The Ministerial Declaration with which the Conference concluded has, in essentials, endorsed India's standpoint on the above issues.

Barriers imposed on the movement of skilled labourers by North America and Europe

2145. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some Indian services like software, consultancy are losing their edge in the global market due to protective and non-tariff barriers imposed on the movement of skilled labourers by North America and Europe;

(b) if so, details of representations if any received in this regard;

(c) the details of action initiated during 1996-97 and proposed during the 1998-99 to take up the issue of market access to movement of "natural persons" with WTO to ensure meaningful balance in market area benefits in the service sector; and

(d) the details of the action taken/ proposed for redressal of the issue at multilateral, regional and bilateral formus.

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (d) In the area of services, particularly Indian computer software exporters are facing non-tariff barriers in North American and European markets inter-alia by way of visa regulations which restrict and impose various conditions for the free movement of software personnel. The issue of better market access and denial/ delay in obtaining visas/work permits for Indian service providers is taken up bilaterally with the concerned countries as well as at appropriate international fora. Comprehensive round of Services negotiations under General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in WTO is scheduled to begin in the year 2000. Enhanced market access through the mode of movement of natural persons shall also be part of these negotiations. The Government is preparing for these negotiations.

Assessment of export promotion schemes

2146. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that during the last four years, Government doled out Rs. 16,000 crore to exporters via export promotion schemes;

(b) if so, the details thereof and how much foreign exchange has been earned as a result thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that no mechanism has been set up to monitor the earning of foreign exchange on these schemes; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Forgoing or refund of customs duties on the inputs required for the export products is inherent in the various export schemes. This is based on the universal principle that export goods should either not be subject to such duties in the first instance by granting duty exemptions; or the duties, if already paid, should be neutralised through the mechanism of retund/rebate, drawback, pass book credit, etc. Viewed in this context, it cannot be said that the Government has doled out huge amount* of money to the exporters via the export promotion schemes.

(b) Various export schemes have played a very significant role in the country's export performance. It is however not possible to precisely quantity how much foreign exchange has been earned on account of the operation of different export schemes, since exports, and the foreign exchange earnings arising therefrom, are influenced by several